

State Representative

ZACK HUDGINS

Legislative News for the 11th District



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May 2004

Dear neighbor,

My service to you as your State Representative continues to be one of the most interesting and amazing experiences of my life, and I would like to thank you again for the opportunity and honor of serving you.

This year's session was short and fast-moving. We had only 60 days to address issues ranging from education reforms to health care coverage, and from unemployment to the budget.

Our priorities — investing in education, making health care more affordable and creating jobs — were on our plates from the very first day of session. We made significant accomplishments in all of these areas.

While in Olympia, we focused on real issues that hit close to home and affect businesses and families across the state.

To help me serve you better, you can call me on our toll free hotline, 1-800-562-6000. I value what you have to say and am grateful for your interest and participation. Thank you again for this opportunity to serve you over the last two years.

Sincerely,

Zack Hudgins
State Representative
11th Legislative District

State Representative **Zack Hudgins • District 11**

The Supplemental Budget

You'll remember we faced a very large budget shortfall in 2003 due to the economic recession. Since the state depends so heavily on sales tax revenue, a downturn hurts the state's ability to provide basic services. This year the economy has improved a bit, and that helped us to carefully craft an adjustment to the biennial budget, which restores some of the deep cuts to the health care safety net, makes intelligent investments, does not include any new taxes and still keeps \$305 million in reserve.



The supplemental budget addressed the need to improve the economy through more affordable health care, education investments and jobs with good benefits. Here are some highlights from the budget:

- Stronger financial aid is directed to boost enrollment in our universities.
- Hospitals and community clinics will get funding to help more uninsured people.
- The state will help school districts fund their basic programs.
- Children will no longer have to pay health-care premiums if their families make less than 150 percent of the poverty level.
- Mental health services are funded to last year's levels.
- Domestic violence shelters received some state funding in order to address a growing problem.

Getting things done

I want to tell you about two bills I introduced that were recently signed into law by Gov. Gary Locke:

House Bill 2685 — Washington State is home to tens of thousands of soldiers, but they often have trouble using their military identity cards. The old law required an identity card with a physical signature, while new military IDs use new technology and new digital signatures. This reform lets our soldiers use their military ID, with the digital signatures in State Liquor Stores.



House Bill 2830 – This reform makes it easier for businesses to use existing state data – without expanding access to that data. Ultimately it will help keep insurance rates down for good drivers, while making government work better.

Transportation

In my last newsletter I included a partial list of some of the transportation projects that are being carried out in our area. Here is the rest of the list. If you have any questions about a specific project feel free to contact the Department of Transportation at (360)705-7000, or look on their website at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/>.

- I-90, I-405, SR 167, and SR 520 freeways will get safety improvements in the form of new HOV lane hours, revised signs, lane re-striping, and roadside safety work.
- Construction of noise walls along SR 169 at 5th Ave SE in Renton.
- Preservation work: repaving I-5 ramps at the Boeing Access Road, replacing broken concrete panels on portions of SR 99 and resurfacing parts of SR 181, SR 516, and SR 900.
- New lights, drains or signals around the Spokane street exit of I-5, the Albro/Swift and Corgiat intersections near I-5, the SR 99 and 14th St interchange, and the SR 518 and 42nd Ave S intersection near Klickitat Drive.

Legislative News for the 11th District

Good Jobs with Good Benefits

The legislature is working hard in a number of ways to move our economy forward. Not only are we doing what we can to make government work better and write a budget without new taxes – but we are also being proactive about where the jobs of the future will come from.

SMALL BUSINESS HELP: This session we created the Small Business Incubator (SBI) Program to assist companies in economically distressed or disadvantaged areas. There are more than 950 SBIs across the country, and the need for them in Washington State is growing. National research shows that for every \$1 in public investment in small business incubators, \$45 in local tax revenue is generated.

CREATING FUTURE JOBS: This year we passed legislation to give targeted and accountable tax breaks to high-tech companies for research and development activities, because they create good jobs for Washington workers. Accountability is a fundamental component in this measure.

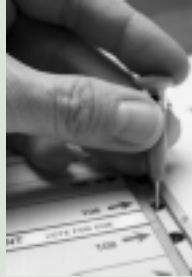


We want to make sure the incentives are actually doing the job: strengthening businesses *and* putting people to work here.

PROTECTING OUR CURRENT JOBS: I am one of the leaders in the House looking for ways to fight the outsourcing of our jobs. We need to make sure our tax dollars are being used to create jobs here at home. We need to make sure we have standards set for workers who have to train their replacements. And we need to make sure customers have access to information about where businesses and call centers are located. Globalization can be a good thing when it opens up societies and spurs innovation – but it has to be done in a fair and inclusive way that doesn't hurt hard working people in Washington.

The legislation I worked on would protect Washington jobs in our changing economy.

A new primary for Washington



Our popular blanket primary election was declared unconstitutional recently – and that started a storm of debate.

After many drafts of legislation and long debates about different primary election models across the country, the “Montana-style” primary election should be implemented here in Washington State in September. Under the new “Montana-style” system, voters may choose among candidates from a single party in partisan races in the primary election, in addition to voting for any person in the non-partisan races. Voters’ choice of parties is completely confidential and no party registration is required. Independent voters have a choice of any party on a year-to-year basis, while maintaining their privacy by not being identified by either political party.

This won't affect your ability to vote across party lines in the General election, and it will keep your party choice in the Primary election private. I am happy to talk to you about the details of the different proposals that didn't pass, or how I feel about our primary election if you give me a call on the hotline: 1-800-562-6000.

Health Care

Health care continues to drive costs up for businesses and families. The Legislature continues to struggle with the issue of health care, and this session we made some great progress in helping people.

IMPACT ON KIDS: We eliminated the proposed premium on Washington's poorest children, while putting a \$10 monthly premium on families of three whose income is less than \$31,340, and \$15 premiums on families of three whose income is less than \$39,175.

We also increased support for community clinics by \$2.5 million and boosted grants to hospitals by \$10 million so they are partially compensated for treating the uninsured.

IMPACT ON BUSINESSES: This session we passed legislation that should reduce costs for small businesses. The new law allows insurance companies to offer small employers (50 or fewer employees) an “economy plan” in which patients can also see alternative providers like naturopaths, chiropractors and acupuncturists.

HOME CARE WORKERS: Home care workers earn just \$8.43 an hour for working strenuous, labor-intensive jobs. They help to keep seniors and the developmentally disabled in their own homes, which allows them to be more independent and closer to their families, and also saves the state money.

This session we worked out a new contract for our state's 26,000 home caregivers that gives them a pay boost of 50 cents an hour, plus health benefits. This was part of fulfilling the initiative passed by voters.



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Education reforms that make sense

The governor signed a package of much needed education reforms that include changes to the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), and the Learning Assistance Program (LAP).

WASL:

Starting in 2008 students will have to pass the WASL and meet the testing requirements in major subject areas, such as math and reading.

I supported the reforms made to the WASL because it is important that students master the knowledge

of high school, not that they pass the WASL test on their first try. We allow re-takes on many tests, like driving tests or Law or Accounting exams – now high school students can get a second shot too.



LAP:


The Learning Assistance Program was created to assist under-achieving students in kindergarten through ninth grade who need extra support in reading, mathematics or writing. Schools with low test scores are eligible for this additional funding.

The program has worked—but when funding is taken away from these schools, test scores drop again. This legislature passed a law that refocuses the program to stop the test score yo-yo while adding accountability measures to insure its effectiveness. This solution will help make both students and schools more successful.

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